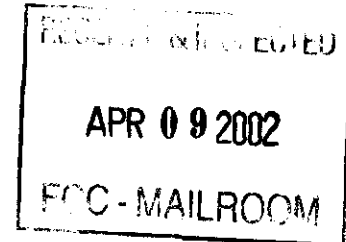


ORIGINAL EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

Ms. Magalie Salas  
Office of Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554



**Subject:** EX PARTE COMMENT FOR DOCKET NUMBER 90-571 ~~on~~ NECA FUNDS and EX PARTE COMMENT TO DOCKET NUMBER 98-67 ON TRS/STS OUTREACH

Dear Ms. Salas,

## REQUEST

We live in New York and urge the DPS-Public Service Commission to establish an effective STS outreach service. We are members of a laryngectomy support group at Long Island Jewish Medical Center. We meet weekly to discuss our surgeries and the effects that have been felt in our lives. Our ability to communicate easily on the telephone has been compromised due to the surgery, making something as necessary as a telephone call difficult. We agree that STS is a viable option for making telecommunications easier and more enjoyable. We hope to enable others with speech-language difficulties to become aware of this option as a way to enhance communication.

## SUCCESS STORIES

In California, people with speech disabilities have dramatically improved their lives because of STS. One example is Dr. Robert Aber who experienced great growth in his psychology practice once he was able to communicate with clients over STS. Writer Pam Hoyer advanced her writing career substantially using STS to gather facts for articles. Dr. Bob Segalman became successful as a social activist helping people with speech disabilities once he began using STS. STS potentially answers the telecommunications needs of thousands of people.

## PROVIDING STS OUTREACH

In addition to providing STS itself, providing outreach appropriate to people with speech disabilities is an essential part of access. When people with speech disabilities have appropriate training to use STS, they become more independent, participate more in the community, gain access to employment opportunities, et cetera. The new Relay regulations require states and Relay providers to contract such that Relay is accessible to users with speech disabilities.

If the DPS-Public Service Commission provides STS without appropriate outreach, call volume will be extremely low. Call volume could rise substantially with an extensive STS outreach service tailored to people with speech disabilities. Failure to provide appropriate outreach for STS means that New York residents with speech disabilities may not be able to communicate easily with others in mainstream society.

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# ORIGINAL

Because we want this independence for people with speech disabilities in New York, we strongly urge the DPS-Public Service Commission to provide an STS outreach service similar to the very successful STS intensive outreach services in Minnesota and, to a lesser extent, in California and Maryland.

APR 09 2002

FCC-MAILROOM

## FUNDING STS OUTREACH

Based on Minnesota's budgetary experience, such a service may cost \$540,000 annually because of New York's high population. Many states have sufficient surcharge money to fund a STS outreach service without difficulty. Vocational rehabilitation client services money may be available to teach people to use STS as it fosters independence and makes individual's job-ready.

## CONCLUSION

A large proportion of people with speech disabilities have other disabilities as well; this makes it very difficult for them to advocate for themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for us to ensure that services like STS outreach are adequately provided for. We feel that STS is an invaluable tool that could potentially benefit large numbers of New York State residents who have difficulties communicating. It would be a waste if this precious resource was wasted on only a few individuals when countless others with speech disabilities could benefit as well. An STS outreach program is necessary to inform others of this exciting option to enhance communication.

Again, we strongly urge the DPS-Public Service Commission to budget for an effective STS outreach service with an annual budget of approximately \$540,000.

Sincerely,

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2/12/02

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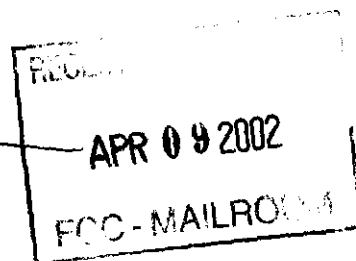
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cc: Michael B. Fingerhut, General Attorney  
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cc: Kenneth Goulston, Relay Account Manager  
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cc: Disability Rights Office  
Consumer Information Bureau  
Federal Communications Commission, Room 6C-447  
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cc: Sonny Moze, Office of Consumer Education & Advocacy  
New York State Department of Public Service  
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cc: Bob Segalman, Ph.D.  
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